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N'west Baptists reaching out to ethnics

By William H. Perkins Jr.
Editor

Bivocational pastor Chuck McKnight dreamed big, turned his dream over to God, and quickly discovered that even the biggest dreams can grow larger with God in charge.

Since September 1998, McKnight has shepherded Country Haven Chapel, in the Country Haven Mobile Home Park in Hernando. His vision was to provide an opportunity for the growing Hispanic community in the park to worship in a Southern Baptist facility.

However, the English-speaking ministry of the chapel caught on quickly and has grown at such a rapid pace that it will soon spin off as a self-supporting church, while the Spanish-speaking ministry will continue to reach out to Hispanics residing in the park and beyond.

McKnight and his Spanish-speaking counterpart, Filipe Soto, will soon be pastoring the equivalent of two congregations meeting under one roof at the mobile home park — with both nearly bursting at the seams.

The park currently contains 300 mobile homes, and 200 more spaces for mobile homes are being developed. McKnight estimates that more than 4,000 people will be living in the park within two years.

"The need (for Hispanic ministry) is growing in this area," said John Perkins, missions director for Northwest Association in Hernando. "I foresee doing something to help oversee a Spanish-speaking ministry in the near future."

Southern Baptists in general are also waking up to the need to minister to ethnic groups like Hispanics, which in some cases are the only groups recording real growth in the Southern Baptist Convention.

The United States is the world's third-largest country in Hispanic population, Southwestern Seminary missions professor Daniel Sanchez said in a February 2 Baptist Press article.

"If we're looking at the Hispanics as a mission field, from a global perspective, then the country with the third-largest Hispanic population should be a major focus of the Southern Baptist Convention's attention," said Sanchez, director of Southwestern's Church Growth Institute on the seminary's main campus in Ft. Worth.

An emphasis on the culture is needed, said David Lema, the Miami (Fla.) Baptist Association's director of Hispanic ministries.

"A church that would provide a cultural setting where (Hispanics) could feel comfortable and a linguistic setting where they could relate and understand — that would be a growing church," Lema told Baptist Press.

"People feel comfortable in their cultural setting. They will flock to it," he pointed out.

That's something the churches of Northwest Association understand, according to Perkins.

"Not a lot of people come out of the mobile home park to attend local churches," Perkins said, so local churches are taking the Gospel to the mobile home park.

Boulevard Church, Southaven, where McKnight was a member, and First Church, Nesbit, signed on early to McKnight's idea to plant a Hispanic chapel in Country Haven Park. Other Northwest Association churches have pitched in along the way.

Northwest Association also provided help and supported chapel proponents in their successful quest for assistance from the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board.

Last fall, members and friends of Country Haven Chapel dedicated their new worship center in a special service and then did what any other Southern Baptist congregation would do under similar circumstances — they enjoyed a Hispanic-flavored dinner on the grounds.

"The only way we can set this building apart is to set this body of believers apart," Kirt Germany, pastor of First Church, Nesbit, said at the dedication.

"What is going on here is more relevant than what is going on in many of our church houses today. You're reaching people with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and that's the most relevant thing you can do," said Don Coleman, pastor of Boulevard Church, at the dedication.

Pastor Soto praised the efforts of Mississippi Baptists at all levels who helped bring the chapel to life.

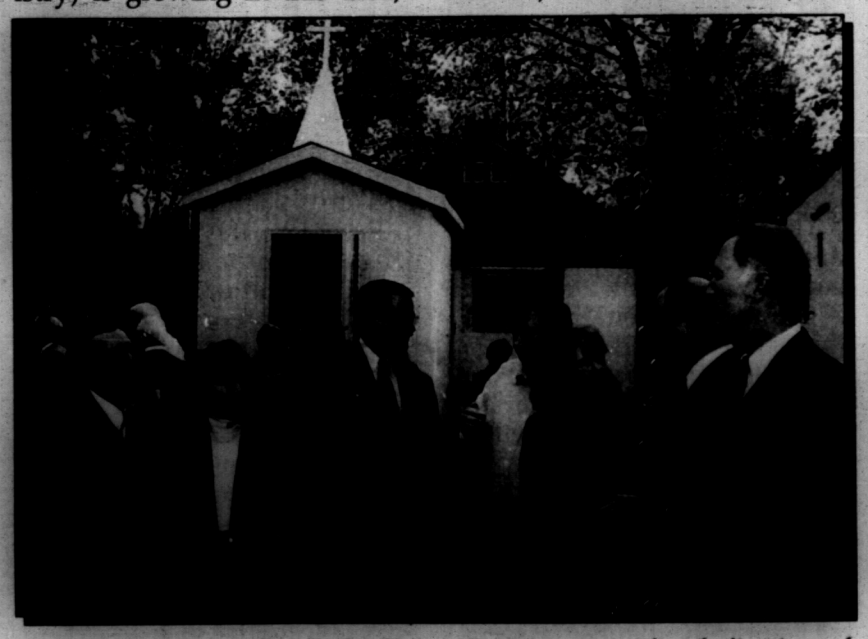
"You don't find many chapels in trailer parks. You may find drugs and you may find beer, but you don't find many chapels," he said.

Six people were saved in the weeks surrounding the dedication of the new building, Soto pointed out.

"We need to pray that God will continue to bless this ministry," he stressed.

Editor's note: For more information on Mississippi Baptist ethnic ministries, contact Ed Deuschle, director of strategic missions, Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Telephone: (601) 292-3224 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651, ext. 224. E-mail: edeuschle@mbcb.org.

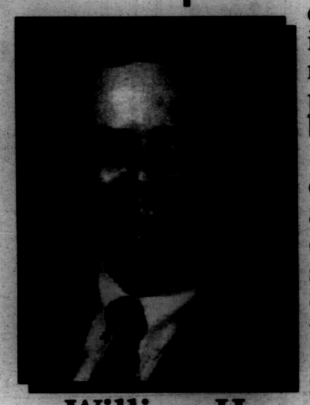
HONORING GOD — Members and friends of Country Haven Chapel in Hernando gather in the courtyard of the chapel's new worship facility (background) for a prayer of praise and dedication for the building. The chapel continues to grow as it ministers to residents of Country Haven Mobile Home Park. (Photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)



DEDICATING NEW FACILITY — Participants in the dedication of the new worship facility at Country Haven Chapel in Hernando included (from left) Filipe Soto, the chapel's Spanish-speaking pastor; Soto's wife Estella; Don Coleman, pastor of Boulevard Church, Southaven; Chuck McKnight, the chapel's English-speaking pastor; McKnight's wife Melody, who serves as pianist at the chapel; Kirt Germany, pastor of First Church, Nesbit; and John Perkins, missions director for Northwest Association in Hernando. (Photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)

WHAT'S IN THE RECORD

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK



William H. Perkins Jr.
Editor

This holy ground

One of the high privileges of serving as editor of The Baptist Record is the opportunity to worship with Mississippi Baptists in their churches across the state.

From the cavernous big-city facilities in the pathway of major urban expansions, to the smaller and more rural churches heavily laden with our rich history, when we enter church we are reminded of who we are, whose we are, and from whence we came as a people of God.

It's been quite a while since the state's first Baptist preacher, Richard Curtis Jr., debarked his Mississippi River raft in the early 1800s and started organizing churches in the southwest portion of what was soon to become the State of Mississippi.

We no longer have to flee bellicose Native Americans or dodge angry Catholics from Louisiana, as did Curtis, but the battle for the souls of Mississippians is far from over. In the buckle of the Bible Belt, we still have our work cut out for us.

In a state with over 2,000 Southern Baptist churches alone, too many people have opted out of attending church — and too many of those people have allowed their relationship to falter with Almighty God and his son, Jesus Christ.

Learned people have made the argument, not entirely invalid, that one needn't go to church to be an observant Christian. That may be so, but the difficulty of practicing a true faith without being a part of a body of believers is surely more than most people can overcome in this increasingly materialistic and pagan world.

A church is a sanctuary from the pressures of that world, and a refuge for the spiritually downtrodden. It is the place that fits the description of home in Robert Frost's unforgettable poem, The Death of a Hired Man — when you go there, they have to take you in.

The mere hour that it takes to attend a modern worship service can do more to restore a person's zest for life than many hours of psychotherapy. Sunday School and Discipleship gird us for the never-ending fight against the Evil One, who is so very alive and well in our modern era.

Little ones begin the process of Scripture memorization that will serve them through a lifetime. Royal Ambassadors and Girls in Action learn of missions around the world and find their own place in the Kingdom work.

Church is a lighthouse beacon for the lost. Church is a solid anchor in the storms of life. Church is energy for the spiritually exhausted. Church is all those things and much more.

Church is, above all, holy ground.

In our so-called enlightened, post-Christian American culture, virtually nothing is considered holy.

To the world's ears, "holy" is just a meaningless word that sounds good when it precedes "matrimony," which itself has been reduced to nothing more than an easily-voided piece of paper gathering dust in a courthouse storeroom.

Children of today who watch too many television shows and movies may believe that "holy" is simply a a four-letter word to be placed for dramatic effect in front of a variety of other four-letter words.

The iconoclasts in the entertainment industry seldom think of the word in any other fashion, as evidenced by their vapid scripts.

We should not be deceived. Holiness is and always has been important to God. Even the simplest concordance lists 42 biblical references for holy and holiness, almost evenly split between the Old and New Testaments.

When we enter church, we are standing on holy ground. However the world defines holiness, the word should have special meaning to us when we tread the precious soil on which our houses of worship are built.

God considers it holy ground and we should, too. That means we should conduct ourselves in holy ways in mind, spirit, and body when we are on holy ground.

The latter part of Hebrews 12:14 states, "...without holiness no one will see the Lord." Disregarding the ways of the world, let us live by those words — else the true meaning of holy be explained to us on our day of reckoning.

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GUEST OPINION:

What is associational missions?

By J. Courtney Selvy
Associational Missions Director
Panola Association, Batesville

Southern Baptists are an amazing group of people. In Mississippi, for example, on an average Sunday nearly five million dollars are collected through Mississippi Baptist churches for the cause of Christ. When you begin to look at how those dollars get combined and channeled through the various cooperative efforts, well, it's simply amazing how Baptists have developed their connectionalism.

One remarkable way we connect with each other as autonomous churches in through the Association. Each year in May, we have an Associational Missions Emphasis Week which celebrates this unique method of partnering to be on mission as Baptist churches. Every so often less cooperative-minded individuals challenge the practice of association. Both enable us to retrace heritage, tap our roots, and continue to grow this giant tree of Southern Baptist life.

What is associational missions? We probably would do well to look at both words separately and then together. Mission is defined by Webster as "a task or function assigned or undertaken."

Many churches have adopted a mission statement. Even a couple of fast food restaurants now proudly display their mission statement. Mission is simply what we sense we need to be about doing.

The Great Commission of Matt. 28:18-20, gives us the mandate of what we are to do as New Testament churches. This is our mission.

What is association? In his book, A Baptist Association: Churches on Mission Together, J. C. Bradley defines the Baptist association as a "self governing fellowship of autonomous churches, sharing a common faith and active on mission in their setting."

Historically, Baptist associations have been around for quite a while. The earliest Baptist association was established in England in 1642. The first association in America was established in Philadelphia, Pa., in 1707. The Charleston Association, established in 1751, was the earliest in the South.

Early on, these associations existed to promote fellowship and cooperation among their "like faith and order" churches. Through the years, the emphasis or primary role of the association has shifted.

In the last quarter of the 20th century, associations have functioned as a dispersing and promoting arm of the state and national Southern Baptist conventions. However, even this role is taking on a new look as associations become more and more involved in partnership missions and strengthening local congregations.

Now let's consider the two words together — associational missions. Southern Baptists have coined a phrase to give unique verbal expression to something which is uniquely ours.

Associational missions may be identified with those events and activities ranging from Bible Drills to volunteer mission trips; from Sunday School to Men's Ministry; WMU and VBS; Cooperative Program promotion to annual meetings (spring and fall); clothes closets and food pantries; new churches; and mission chapels.

In a phrase, associational missions has to do with enabling churches to be in fellowship and on mission individually and together. The organizational structure, budget, calendar, goals, participation, and activities is "associational missions."

Associations have always been a vital part of our Kingdom work as Southern Baptists. As we enter the 21st century, we will discover that our connectionalism will remain a powerful force as we continue to be about the Great Commission.

May 21-27 is Associational Missions Emphasis Week. Let's celebrate this time by magnifying this unique and efficient way we Baptists work together in Kingdom efforts.

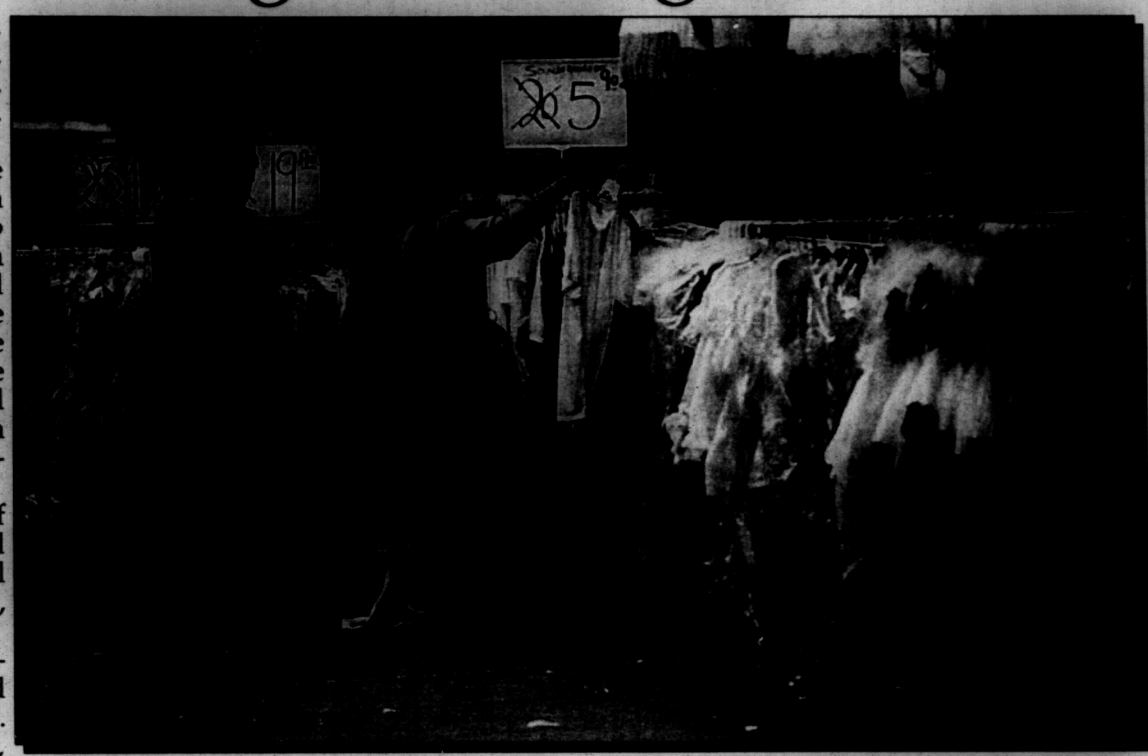
Team focusing on immigrants and refugees

RICHMOND, Va. (BP) — Amsterdam. Berlin. Brussels. Frankfurt. Paris. Madrid. Rome.

Premier cities like these in Western Europe conjure up images of vacation travel. Well-heeled tourists stand in line to snap photos of the Eiffel Tower, sample haute cuisine, and spend fortunes on fashion and entertainment.

For millions of immigrants and refugees who call these cities home, there is no glamour.

Instead of financial success, they find language barriers. Instead of a new life, they find alcohol and nightclubs. Instead of hope, they find spiritual darkness and despair.



GATEWAY CITIES — Millions of immigrants and refugees from Last Frontier countries, like these in downtown Frankfurt, Germany, have helped turn western Europe's capitals into "gateway cities" for people groups unreached with the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ. (BP photo)

Southern Baptists would like to change that. With a vision for reaching these seven strategic gateway cities in Western Europe, a ministry group called "Tsilent Tsunami" (pronounced: silent soo-NAH-mee) has made inroads with the Gospel.

Tsilent Tsunami's team members are reaching out to pockets of immigrants and political refugees, many of whom enjoy Europe's religious freedom in contrast to that of their birth countries in Asia, northern Africa, and the Middle East.

The name "Tsilent Tsunami" came from the idea of a tsunami, or tidal wave, of prayer and outreach spilling quietly across Western Europe. Using avenues like praying, teaching English, crafts, dancing, singing, and cutting hair, team members are sharing the Gospel among otherwise closed people.

"Many refugees come from closed access countries where it's illegal to witness or to convert to Christianity," says Chris Mills, associate director of International Mission Board work in Western Europe. "They bring with them the religions they know, and often, hurting, empty hearts ravaged by wars and persecution."

Volunteers are needed for prayerwalking and distributing Christian materials in a variety of languages.

"The world is moving to Western Europe," Mills says. "In London, for example, there are areas where English is by far a minority language. In fact, over 140 languages are spoken in London."

In Germany, he added, "I've been told that the largest Turkish population outside of Turkey resides in Germany."

Besides breaking apart the image of people groups contained each in their own country, the flood of immigrants to these gateway cities has done much to deconstruct the view of Western Europe as a "Christian" area.

In fact, Southern Baptist strategists have dubbed Western Europe "the new Last Frontier."

In most countries, evangelicals account for less than one percent of the population. Spain, dotted with ornate cathedrals, is considered one of the least evangelized countries on earth. In France, practicing Muslims outnumber both Catholics and evangelicals combined.

"Most Americans think of the great cathedrals in Western Europe and conclude, 'It must be a Christian place; just look at all the churches,'" Mills explains. "The truth is, those church buildings are just monuments and mausoleums. They're filled with people, all right — tourists who take pictures and whisper aloud while a solitary priest pronounces Mass over a small group of aged congregants."

Most western Europeans know "church" as an old, cold stone building where "dull, backward-thinking old priests and pastors who care little for the people live in the shadows of their crosses," he adds.

Instead, Tsilent Tsunami teams want to present the New Testament idea of church as a living, vibrant extension of salvation in Jesus Christ.

"Compared to [immigrants'] home countries, Western Europe provides a very safe environment to witness," he says. "While they are in transition, these people are especially open to receive Christ, but the window doesn't remain open indefinitely. We have to respond while they are ready."

With a goal of placing one million volunteers, plus long- and short-term missionary personnel, in the seven gateway cities, Tsilent Tsunami leaders want to give Bibles to every member of an unreached people group.

"That's an enormous task," Mills acknowledges. "Sound impossible? It's never been done before.

"Then neither had anyone walked on water or fed 5,000 with a few loaves and fishes until Jesus did it."

Editor's note: For more information, contact Tsilent Tsunami at info@tsilenttsunami.com or toll-free (888) 836-5464. Web site: www.tsilenttsunami.com.

LifeWay best sellers

Hardback

1. Prayer of Jabez, Bruce Wilkinson (Multnomah)
2. Fresh Power, Jim Cymbala (Zondervan)
3. Praying God's Word, Beth Moore (B&H)
4. Night Light, James Dobson (Multnomah)
5. He Chose the Nails, Max Lucado (Word)
6. Breaking Free, Beth Moore (B&H)
7. Grace for the Moment, Max Lucado (Countryman)
8. My Utmost for His Highest Revi, Oswald Chambers (Barbour)
9. Just Give Me Jesus, Anne Graham Lotz (Word)
10. Experiencing God Day by Day Dev & Journal, Henry Blackaby (B&H)

Paperback

1. Power of a Praying Wife, Stormie Omartian (Harvest)
2. Power of a Praying Parent, Stormie Omartian (Harvest)
3. Five Love Languages, Gary Chapman (Moody)
4. Bad Girls of the Bible, Liz Curtis Higgs (Waterbrook)
5. Jesus Freaks, DC Talk (Albury)
6. Boy Meets Girl, Josh Harris (Multnomah)
7. Experiencing God Revs w/Study Questions, Henry Blackaby (B&H)
8. Case for Faith, Lee Strobel (Zondervan)
9. Five Love Languages of Children, Gary Chapman & Ross Campbell, (Moody)
10. Sacred Romance, John Eldredge (Nelson)

Looking back

10 years ago

FamilyNet, a broadcast television faith and family network, begins operation under the Radio and Television Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, headquartered in Ft. Worth, Tex. FamilyNet was formerly part of the Jerry Falwell's ministry organization.

20 years ago

Ebenezer Church located along Route 5 near Liberty in Amite County (Mississippi Association) celebrates its 175th anniversary. The church, organized in 1806, lays claim to the title of the oldest continuously-active Baptist church in Mississippi.

30 years ago

American church membership since 1926 has increased at a rate nearly double that of the country's population growth, according to a survey made by the National Council of Churches. Between 1926 and 1949 church membership went up 51.5% while the population grew approximately 30%.

MISSISSIPPI BAPTISTS

THE SECOND FRONT PAGE

THE BAPTIST Record

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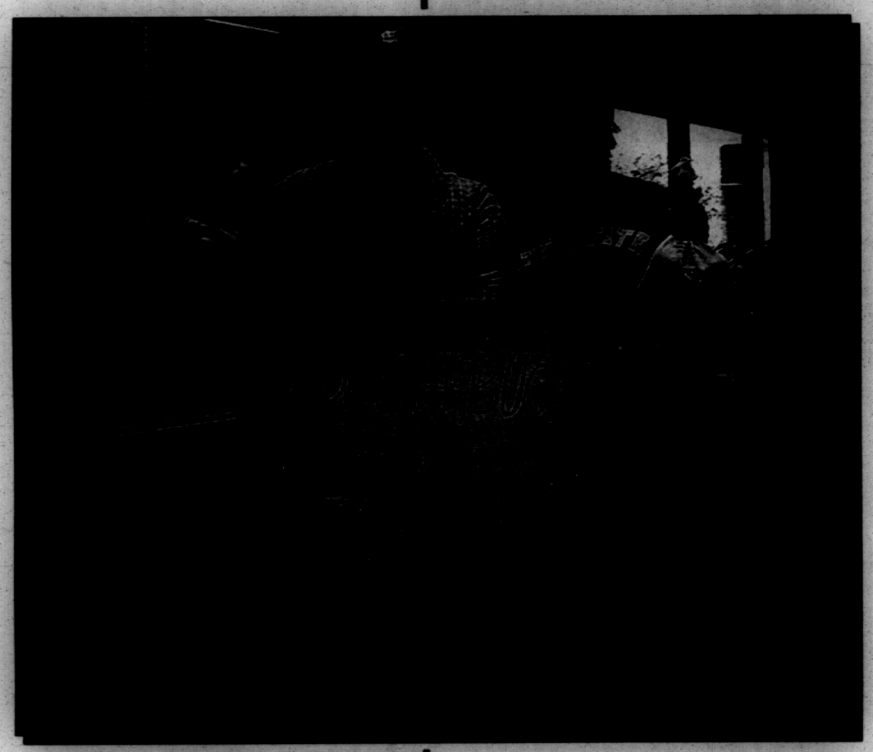
Missions top priority at the Northeast BSU

By Wayne Vandiver, director
Northeast Comm. College BSU

The story is about Baptist Student Union (BSU) members at Northeast Community College (NECC) in Booneville who really care about missions, ministry, and evangelism. These students have shown their concern by giving of their time and money to spread the Gospel around the world.



BSU LEADERS — Brad Essary (left), 1999 missions chairman and Paige Rowan, 2000 missions chairman for the Northeast Community College Baptist Student Union (BSU) in Booneville, motivated BSU members to raise over $35,000 for missions over two years. (BR special photo)

What exactly have they done? They travel annually to New Orleans to "street witness" on Bourbon St. and in the French Quarter. Sixty-two students participated in this experience during the 1999-2000 school year.

These students saw 23 people pray to receive Christ during the four-day trip. This year's group of fifty-five saw seven people pray to receive Christ — and, as the old saying goes, only the Lord knows how many seeds were planted.

Students have always come back from this mission experience with a burden they did not have before for a lost world. They have also shown a change in their lifestyle, coming home with a boldness they did not have before they went to share the Gospel in northeast Mississippi.

Many students on the NECC campus have been led to the Lord by students who got their starts in personal evangelism on this trip.

Another experience that has demonstrated the concern of these students has been a BSU summer missions fund-raiser called, "Tuck-a-Buck." Each year during the month of February, the guys square off against the girls in this giving game.

The plan is simple. The guys put paper money in their jar and coins in the girls' jar. The girls put paper money in their jar and coins in the guys' jar.

The rule is, paper counts for your jar and coins count against your jar. Students can sign a participation list if they put in at least $15. When the contest is over, the losers have to feed the winners a steak supper and provide an entertaining program for them.

The guys won this contest last year. The total given was just over $7,000. The girls won this year, with a grand total of just over $7,800. The NECC BSU's 2001 summer missions goal of $16,500 is now very close to being met.

Anyone who appreciates hard work would be proud to watch these students in action. They have done everything from serving as waiters at Pizza Hut to washing cars and having bake sales. They have also shared the needs of the summer missions program with their families, churches, and friends.

They have given out of their own pockets. Some will save their coins for a whole year in preparation for Tuck-a-Buck. They have shown wisdom in their fundraising.

Wal-Mart has matched funds raised with $1,000 both years.

The stories could go on if space permitted. Stories could be told of teams of students leading in youth lock-ins at area churches and seeing many teenagers come to know Jesus Christ.

Stories could be told of students loving children in local housing projects through the Team Kid program. Elderly folks at the local nursing home could testify that the BSUers really care about them.

Many people from area churches could testify to the love of God seen in these students during a service led by a BSU ministry team.

NECC students who were lost when they came to college could testify about how BSU students loved them, prayed for them, shared Christ with them, and discipled them after they accepted Christ.

People from around the world could share about a BSU summer missionary who was used by God to touch their lives. People from all over the U.S. could share about a BSU group that came during a spring break mission trip to love them in the name of Jesus Christ.

Mississippi Baptists should be encouraged that God is at work in wonderful ways through Baptist Student Unions.

Editor's note: For more information on BSU programs in Mississippi, contact the Collegiate Ministry Department at the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Telephone: (601) 292-3302 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651, ext. 302. E-mail: wmccracken@mbcb.org.

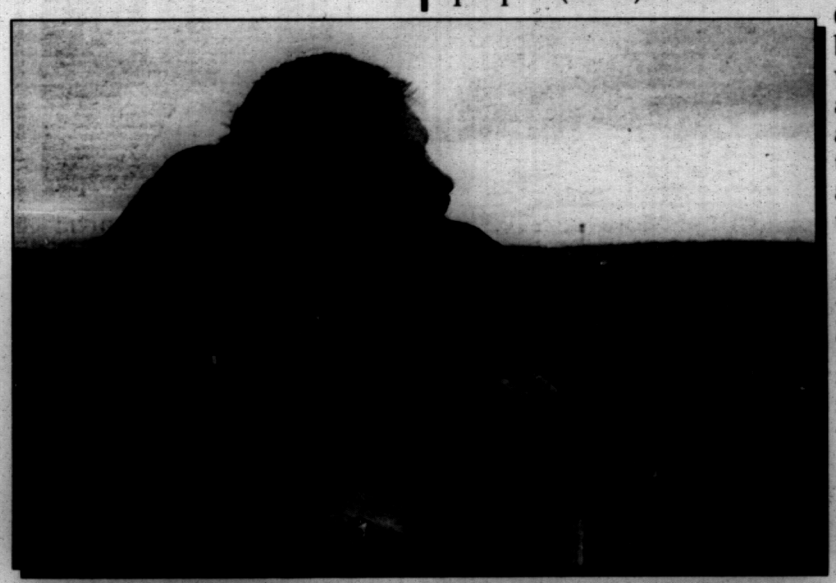
Missionary returning to Africa for final farewell

RICHMOND, Va. (BP) — The diagnosis came in 1998: Charles Beaty, 34-year-old International Mission Board missionary and father of three, had adnocarcinoma of the lung. Lung cancer.

Unfortunately, that type of cancer is extremely resistant to treatment. Following unsuccessful medical procedures, the doctors told Beaty his cancer was terminal and that he likely would die by the end of this coming summer.

Instead of spending his final months in the United States, Beaty and his wife, Christy, decided to return to their mission field for one last goodbye.

"We knew that the Lord wanted us to go back to (our region)," Beaty said. "We have people (there)... that we want to share Christ with, but we also wanted to be an encouragement to the missionaries who are there."



FINAL FAREWELL — Told by his doctors that he had terminal lung cancer, Southern Baptist missionary Charles Beaty, and his wife Christy decided to return to their mission field in northern Africa for one last goodbye. (BP photo)

So, leaving their three young children with family, he and his wife returned to their field in northern Africa. Beaty said he hoped his terminal condition would help people realize they do not have time to waste in making a decision for Christ.

He also hoped his situation would prompt those who are considering a mission career to respond immediately to God's leading.

"The message, the one thing that I would like people to take home from this, is that they should live every day of their life as though it were their last, and that shouldn't be any different than if it wasn't their last," Beaty said.

FACING DEATH — Southern Baptist missionary Charles Beaty, diagnosed with terminal lung cancer, stands in the ruins of an ancient Roman coliseum, where Christians once courageously faced death for their faith. (BP photo)

"All the sorrows, the separation, the tears, the pain — nothing can separate us from the love of God. We as Christians have to show that to the world by going until the very end."

The Beatys were able to serve God in northern Africa for more than two years before his diagnosis. They witnessed many people hearing the Gospel for the first time and — as a result of Christian workers ministering in the area — accepting Christ as their Savior.

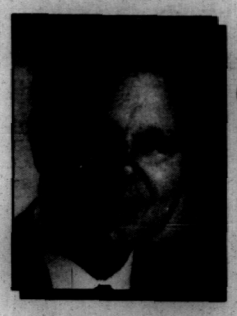
Although the cancer has taken the Beatys off the mission field, their example is inspiring many others.

A prayer network has been pumping out hundreds of prayers for the Beaty family and for the people with whom they worked on the mission field.

Also, the couple's commitment to continue serving God has encouraged future missionaries.

"When people think of Charles Stewart Beaty, I want them to think of the peoples of North Africa who, without hope in Christ, will die and go into eternity hopeless," he said.

"I (also) want them to think, 'I'm going to go and live my life out for Jesus.'"



Directions

Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

The Most Oft Repeated Phrase in America

Have you ever thought about the combination of words that people repeat more often than any others? I believe I know the answer, but I'm unable to prove it scientifically. What do you think it would be?

Of course, there are those phrases that come and go that catch our attention. A short time ago, I remember the commercial on television with the guy slurring the words, "What's up?" As a result of that commercial, almost on a daily basis somebody, somewhere, would say, "Whaaaat's uuuupppp?."

Those phrases come and go. What I want to suggest to you has been around for a while and I believe it is going to be around for a while longer.

Some of you sports enthusiasts probably are thinking about the repetition of questions like: What team is going to win the most games, and who's going to get the most home runs, catch the most passes, throw the most touchdowns, or score the most points? Still, all those things are rather seasonal and they ebb and flow. Not everybody is talking about them.

Occasionally, there will be a national event, crisis, or issue that seems to be the hot topic of conversation and you hear a lot of people expressing their views, i.e. comments related to the Dow Jones and the economy, or issues related to our service people being held by the Chinese. Still, those events come and go and tend to fade from our memory.

The most oft-repeated phrase stays with us — every day, all year long, year after year. Again, what would you say that phrase would be?

Well, let me suggest to you that it is probably, "Can you hear me now?" With the proliferation of cell phones (it seems like everybody has one or two), you see people talking on them constantly.

It's not unusual to pass somebody on the street seemingly talking to themselves; or, overhear somebody laughing and talking, yet nobody is around them. At first you wonder if they have some kind of problem — but no...no problem, just a cell phone!

Now, that brings me to the problem with these new "fangle-bangle" cell machines. If you are inside a building or driving down the road, you may hit a dead spot that is usually accompanied by crackling, spewing, and spraying sounds of interference.

This lets you know that you do not have a good connection. Then the question, "Can you hear me now?" is raised, usually indicating that the person has gotten on down the road, up on a hill, or at least out of the valley and hopefully into a new cell so that you can hear and talk clearly.

I don't know how all this technology works, but I do know there are some times that you can be saying, "Can you hear me now? Can you hear me now?" and the person on the other end says, as if talking to someone else there in the room, "I guess I lost them. I can't hear a thing," and all the while you are still trying to get through to them.

The reverse is also true, as I have been talking to someone and they start asking, "Can you hear me? Can you hear me now?" — to which I reply, "Yea, I can hear you plain and clear. Can you hear me?" and they can't hear a thing!

Now, I know some companies advertise they have better transmission than anyone else and that this problem never happens with their service. Well, I'm here to tell you I've talked to lots of folks, on lots of different systems, and at some point in the conversation they generally say, "Can you hear me now?"

Still, in spite of some of these problems, it is remarkable and amazing to me personally that we can actually communicate with each other using these little cell phones. Also, with this amazing little invention, comes the prominence of the oft-repeated phrase, "Can you hear me now?"

Now, you know — I don't believe we, "The 21st Century Gadget People," were the first to ask this question. It may well be that God, trying to speak to us, was the first and still may be the greatest user of the phrase, "Can you hear me now?"

• **Think about the initiation.** The call comes from God. In the garden, God said, "Adam! Adam! Where art thou?" On the road to Damascus the call was, "Saul, why persecutest thou me?"

Millions have experienced the amazing reality that God does speak to human beings! In fact, the writer of Hebrews expresses it this way in Hebrews 3:7-8, "Today if you hear his voice, harden not your heart." God takes the initiative to speak to us, tell us of his love, warn us of the dangers of sin, show us the right way, and offer us forgiveness and salvation through Jesus.

God is not a passive God and in a thousand different ways, he has arranged to make sure that your phone rings!

• **Think about the interference.** Now, I do not fully understand all the things involved in the transmission of a call from one place to another, or why the calls get messed up. I know that sometimes we are out of range of the transmission towers, and at other times the atmospheric conditions, for some reason, make it difficult for the signals to get through. I don't know if that's because of high pressure, low pressure, or humidity levels, but something messes up the transmission of the signal.

When it comes to people not hearing from God, I have a better understanding. I do know that the problem is not on God's side, but on our side! It could be that sin blocks the transmission waves and so distorts our understanding of what God is trying to say to us, that we don't hear clearly.

At other times we could be out of range, so far away from God that we can't hear what he is trying to say to us. While off in the far country, we don't want to hear and don't try to listen to what he has to say. Many times we simply ignore the call.

• **Think about the insistence.** God does not give up! He keeps on calling. He keeps on caring. He keeps on dialing our number. Have you listened to Jesus as he tells us in Rev. 3, "Behold I stand at the door and knock. If any man will hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him." He keeps calling! He does not give up!

Just recently I was preaching in one of our churches and at the close of the service a dear man in the congregation came to the pastor and asked if he could help him understand how to receive Jesus.

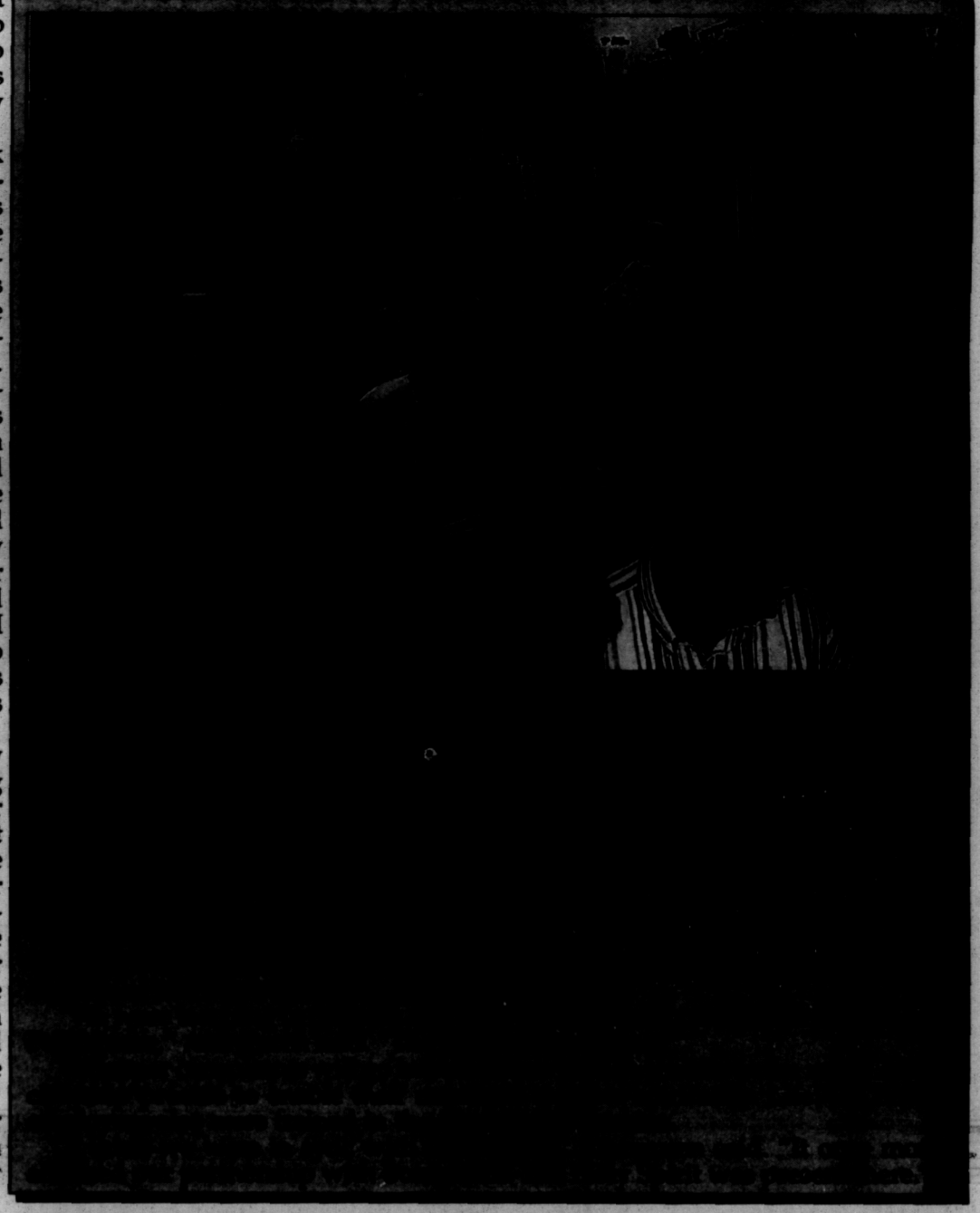
The pastor sat down with him on the pew and with an open Bible explained to the man how he could open his heart and Jesus would gladly come in. Romans 10:9 says, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Right then and there the man did what God said, and God did what he promised!

The pastor came and got me and told me what had just happened. I made my way back to spend some time with this new babe in Christ. As I visited with him about his new life in Christ, I asked him how old he was. He answered, "I'm 74 and I've been needing to do this a long time!"

I asked him why he had put it off all these years. "I don't know. I'm just glad I did it tonight!" he answered. We prayed, he cried, and we celebrated! I'm just glad that the Lord is insistent, persistent, and does not give up on us!

Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your heart. Instead, open your heart's door and invite Jesus to come in. That may well be the Lord asking, "Can you hear me now?"

Leaders receive training in first LifeWay Brazil conference



Just for the Record

Staff changes

First Church of Sharon, Laurel, has called **Dan Watts** as pastor effective April 15. A native of Jackson, Watts received his education at Clarke College; Grand Canyon University, Phoenix, Arizona; and New Orleans Seminary. He previously served as pastor at First Church, Durant.

Watts

RAs of Lorena Church, Scott Association

Lorena Church, Scott Association, has begun an RA class. Pictured, (from left, front row) are Brady Warren, Blake Taylor, Justin Sistrunk, Zach McWilliams; (second row) Hunter Gainey, Chris Wicker, Scott Moss, Corey Sistrunk, Preston Harrison; (third row) Clifton Arinder, Timmy McDill, Lee Wicker, Tony Prestage, Michael McWilliams, and David Goree.

Poplar Springs Church, Newton, raised $2,300 at its annual walk-a-thon on March 25 for the Baptist Children's Village (BCV). Chip Price from the BCV brought the morning message. Thirty-two members and friends (pictured) of the BCV met to walk the five-mile round trip journey. Charles Bonner is pastor.

Stanton Church, Natchez, will present Heaven's Gates and Hell's Flames, May 20-22. The times are Sunday, 6 p.m.; Monday, 7 p.m.; and Tuesday, 7 p.m.

Lena Church, Lena, will conduct a Lay Renewal Weekend, led by David Singleton, May 4-6. Tom Stevens is pastor.

Old Hebron Church, New Hebron, will host Steve Walker in concert, 11 a.m., on April 29.

Pleasant Valley Church, Franklin Association will host Tim Frith and the Gospel Echos, April 28 at 7 p.m. For additional information, call Carl Mason, pastor, at (601) 532-7062 or 532-6389.

Dedication services for the new sanctuary at First Church, Lake, will be held on April 29 at 2 p.m. A reception will follow in the fellowship hall. Ken McLemore is pastor.

Pinola Church, Pinola, will host a fifth Sunday gospel sing on April 29 at 10 a.m. The Sons of Faith and Mandy and Ashley Self will be featured. A potluck covered dish luncheon will follow. Tim Jordan is pastor.

Macedonia Church, Brookhaven, will celebrate its 149th anniversary on May 6 at 10:30 a.m. A noon meal will be served in the Family Life Center. The guest speaker will be Robert H. Perry of Pearl.

African Children's Choir will be in concert at Mt. Olive Church, Hattiesburg, May 2 at 7 p.m.

Gospel Singing will be held at Barnes Crossing Church, Lee County, at 6 p.m. on April 29. Fred Blaylock, Monroe Association, and family will be featured. J. D. Johnson is pastor.

Stand On the Truth youth conference will be held at Wesson Church, Wesson, April 27-29. The times for the events are Friday, 7 p.m.; Saturday, 5 p.m.; and Sunday, 10:45 a.m. and 7 p.m. For further information, call Brian Neal at (601) 587-2945 or the church office at (601) 643-5722.

Farmhaven Church, Madison County, held a lumber cutting/ground breaking service for a new 40′ x 80′ fellowship hall. It will include a modern kitchen, restrooms, and an all-purpose assembly/dining room. Pictured (from left) are members of the building committee, Johnny Cobb, chairman; Larry Hall; Jack Cain; Tommy Faulkner; Rick Pickens; Charles Gentry, pastor; and Sammie Pinkett. Trees for the lumber were donated by Cain and the mobile sawmill was provided by Faulkner.

Members of Poplar Springs Church, Newton

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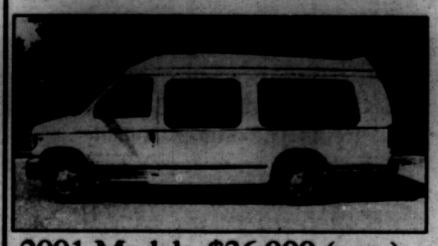

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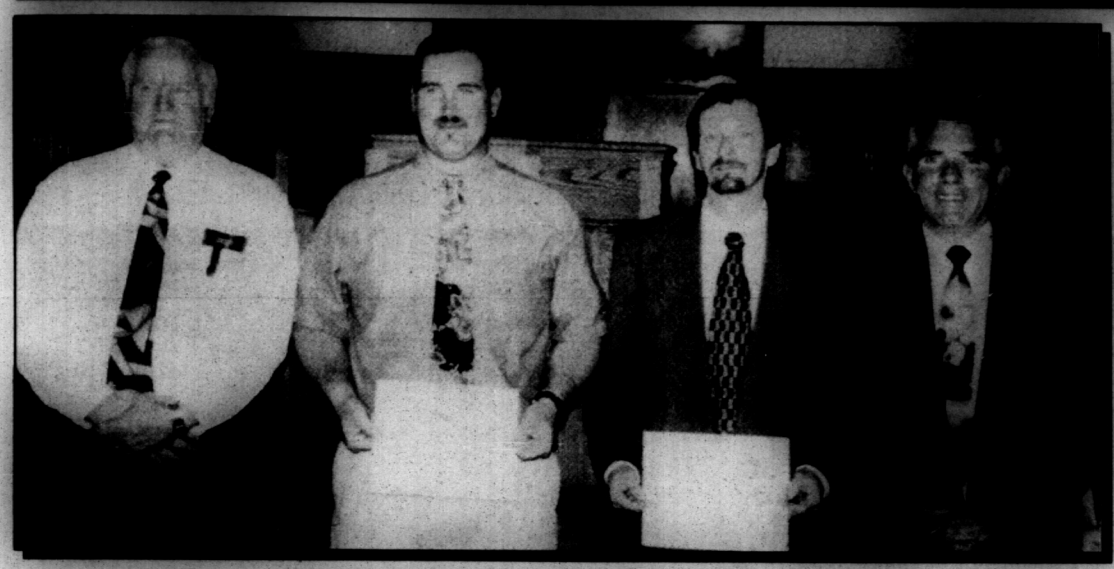
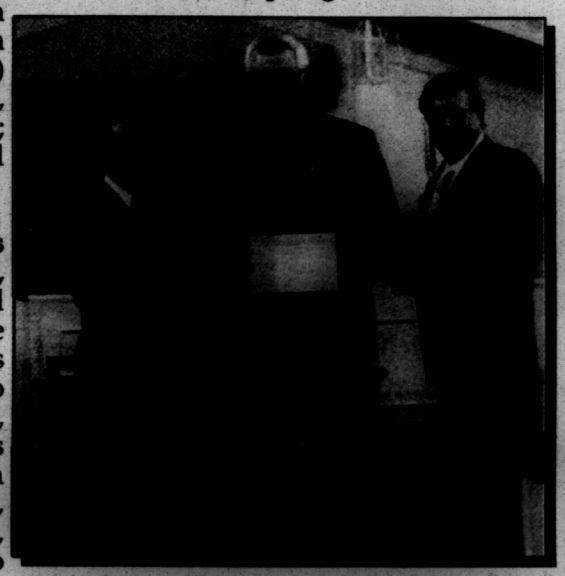


McLendon, Erkhart, Pugh, and Rawls

New Life Church, McLain, ordained Phillip Erkhart and Virail Andrew Pugh as deacons on March 18. Pictured (from left) are M. V. McLendon, deacon chairman; Erkhart; Pugh; and Jerry Rawls, pastor.

Border Springs Church, Caledonia, recently ordained Milton Spotts to the ministry. Spotts has been called to Bartahatchie Church, Monroe County, as pastor. Pictured (from left) are Bobby Cox, missions director, Tishomingo Association; Spotts; and Glen Edmonds, pastor of Border Springs Church.



Cox, Spotts, and Edmonds

James E. (Jim) Whitehead of Philadelphia has been named the Ned Walsh Pro Lifer of the Year by Right to Life of Jackson. The award was presented on March 5 at the annual banquet at Colonial Heights Church, Jackson. Whitehead began ministering at Jackson abortion clinics in January of 1990 and has been making the trip from Philadelphia each week for 11 years. He is a member of Grace Church and teaches a Sunday School class of 5th and 6th graders. Whitehead is a five county coordinator for Southern Baptist Agricultural Missions and a regular with the Monday night jail ministry in Neshoba County.

Whitehead

Lon Anthony (Tony) Williams was licensed to the ministry by his home church, Agricola Church, on April 1. Williams was called to Fellowship Church, Leakesville, as pastor. Pictured are Williams; Tommy Snyder, pastor of Agricola Church; and Tony Davis, pastor of Cedar Grove Church, Leakesville.

Williams, Snyder, and Davis

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BRIARWOOD BAPTIST IN WATKINSVILLE, GEORGIA seeks full-time senior pastor. Growing suburban congregation between Athens and Atlanta. Send resume to Search Committee, 1090 Elder Road, Bishop, GA 30621.

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SUPER GRACE BEACH HOUSE for rent. Excellent for staff retreats or family vacations. Located in a private subdivision at the beach at Fort Morgan, Ala. Visit our website at http://supergrace.jumptravel.com or call Allan or Linda Rankin at (888) 784-4025.

PART-TIME POSITION AVAILABLE: financial secretary, 20 hours per week. First Baptist Church, Ridgeland, MS. Computer experience a must, Shelby software knowledge helpful. Salary DOE. Fax resume to (601) 856-6476.

NEW HOPE BAPTIST CHURCH, Meridian, is seeking a full-time minister of youth and education. Send resume to New Hope Baptist Church, ATTN: Ministerial Staff Search Committee, 6573 Hwy 145, Meridian, MS 39301.

FULL-TIME MINISTER OF MUSIC AND YOUTH NEEDED. Please send resume to: Parkway Baptist Church, P.O. Box 579, Kosciusko, MS 39090; (662) 289-1222 or fax (662) 289-6116.

NEED RESUMES FOR FULL-TIME MINISTER OF YOUTH and also for part-time minister of education. please send to Raymond Baptist Church, P.O. Box 728, Raymond, MS 39154, ATTN: Pastor.

CHURCH AVERAGING 100 IN SUNDAY SCHOOL seeks full-time or bi-vocational associate pastor/minister of music and youth. Please send resume to Calvary Baptist Church, 2878 Old Hwy 27, Vicksburg, MS 39180 or fax (601) 636-7574.

PART-TIME MUSIC MINISTER – Send resume to Emmanuel Baptist Church, 1940 Old Hwy. 35 North, Columbia, MS 39429.

PART-TIME DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S MINISTRY position available at Hillcrest Baptist Church, Jackson, Miss. Contact Victor Doorman at (601) 857-4113 or (601) 878-5905.

POSITION AVAILABLE - full-time minister of music and youth. Housing available. Thirty minutes away from Memphis. Send resume to Slayden Baptist Church, 2534 Highway 72, Lamar, MS 38642 or call (662) 252-4559 or (662) 252-4520; fax (662) 252-5248; e-mail sbchurch@dixie-net.com.

Correction

On page four of the April 19 issue, a reporter's error caused David W. Young, new instrumental consultant in the Church Music Department of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, to be listed as replacing the retiring Dot Pray. Young is actually replacing former instrumental consultant Jim Lott. Wendy South is replacing Dot Pray as keyboard consultant. The Baptist Record regrets the error.

William Carey College (WCC) student Chris Gaskin, a native of West Point, is pictured here in a Chinese orphanage. The little girl had never seen a man with a beard, because the men in her region do not grow them. Gaskin organized nine other WCC students to join 64 participants on a cultural exchange trip to Hong Kong and other parts of China during Christmas holidays. The students and four other participants who lived out of state raised $18,000 in five weeks for the trip.

YOU CAN RESPOND RIGHT NOW!

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. ***(I have sinned.)***
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. ***(I repent.)***
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. ***(I believe in Jesus.)***
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with him. ***(I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)***

But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name (John 1:12).

If you make a decision for Jesus Christ today, contact a local Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

Blue Mountain College (BMC) department of music will present the Spring Choral Concert on April 26 at 7:30 p.m. in Garrett Hall Auditorium. The program will feature the BMC Chorale, handbell choir, and the faculty chorus, under the direction of Larry W. Newell, director of choral activities and voice at BMC. For more information, call (662) 685-4771, ext. 163.

Blue Mountain College is accepting applications for May Intercession courses and summer school. Courses will be held May 7-25. The first session of summer school starts May 30 and the second session on July 2. The office of admissions can be contacted at (662) 685-4161 or (800) 235-0136.

Blue Mountain College's 31st annual basketball clinic for junior high girls is scheduled for June 3-8 and the senior high clinic for June 24-29. Additional information about the camp may be obtained by calling (662) 685-4771, ext. 146.

The William Carey College (WCC) Speech and Debate Team (Forensics) placed fifth out of 72 teams and produced a national champion prose interpreter at the Pi Kappa Delta National Tournament held recently in Boise, Idaho. In addition to the fifth place overall combined sweepstakes ranking, the WCC team placed sixth overall in individual events. This marks the fifth consecutive year that WCC has ranked as one of the top five forensics programs in the nation. Pictured (left to right, front row) are Candace Rose Perez; Samantha Cottrell; Amanda Bass; Jessica Pinion; Cindy Parnell; Jennifer Ruiz; (back row) Michael Chute, chair of the theatre and communication department at WCC; Matthew Smith; Vanessa Stark; Emanueal Buckley; Brian Lucas, director of forensics; Chad Hampton; and Terry Dale Cruse. For more information about the forensics program, contact Brian Lucas at (800) 962-5991 ext. 103.

WCC Speech and Debate Team

REVIVAL DATES

Good Hope (Leake): April 29-May 2; Sunday, Sunday School, 10 a.m., worship, 11 a.m.; Mon.-Wed., 7 p.m.; Keith McGee, evangelist; Wayne McGee, pastor.

Benton, Benton: May 6-9; Sunday, 10:30 a.m. and 7 p.m.; Mon.-Wed., 7 p.m.; Don Taylor, Conehatta, evangelist; Dennis Stringer, Jackson, music; Garland Boyd, pastor.

Utica, Utica: May 4-6; Fri. and Sat., 7:30 p.m.; Sunday, 8:30 a.m. and 11 a.m.; Billy Smith, evangelist; Price Harris, music; John Ed Snell, pastor.

West Marks, Marks: May 4-6; Fri. and Sat., 7 p.m.; Sunday, 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Northwest Community College Baptist Student Union, Senatobia, evangelists; Mike Smithry, pastor.

Mt.Olive (Lebanon): May 7-11; 7 p.m.; Fredrick Fairley, Phoenix, Ariz., evangelist.

New Hope (Lauderdale): April 29-May 2; Sunday, 10:30 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Mon.-Wed., 7 p.m.; Danny Lanier, evangelist; Steve and Becky Carver, music; Cliff Pace, pastor.

Paris (Lafayette): April 29-May 2; Sunday, 11 a.m. and 7 p.m.; Mon.-Wed., 7 p.m.; Terry Brown, missions director, Yalobusha Association, evangelist; Rick Glidewell, pastor.

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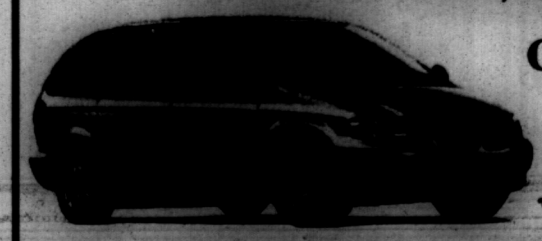
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LifeAnswers

Ron Mumbower, Ph.D.
Minister of Counseling
First Church, Jackson

How can I help my children understand that when they hear one parent "putting down" the other, it is inappropriate, hurtful, and unhealthy?

You are entitled to let your children know of your values, even when there may be conflict with the other parent. Healthy relationships "agree to disagree." It is too high an expectation to believe that two people will agree on everything. This may cause some confusion on the part of the children but it also allows them to see that there are different opinions in the world and that we all have to cope. Let your spouse know of your concerns. Assert yourself and explain to your children that such behavior is inapproriate. You may not get the response that you want immediately, but stand strong. Pray for your spouse and children.

I am having a hard time looking after my health because of a chronic disease and the constant demands of my husband and kids. Do I just do my best until the kids leave home, and hope I have some good health left?

Balance is important in family life. If you are on constant call for your husband and children, you must begin to set appropriate boundaries. Enlist your husband's help with the children so that you can catch your breath. Recruiting family members or even hiring babysitters can be beneficial. You must take care of your body, which is the temple of Christ. You need proper rest and nourishment, especially if you are battling a chronic ailment. Rest when the children rest. If they are older, give them an activity and then rest during that time. Listen to your body and stay in balance by loving God and loving others, as you are loving yourself.

Send your counseling questions to LifeAnswers c/o The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Please be brief. Name is not required. In central Mississippi, Ron Mumbower can be heard from 9-10 a.m. each Wednesday on WHJT-FM 93.5. Remember: in time of crisis, your pastor can make recommendations on your counseling needs.

BIVO BRAVOS

Editor:

My sincere thanks to Jim Futral for his column, Bravos for Bivos. Many bivocational pastors hold seminary degrees and are bivocational by choice. Due to the bivocational pastor's time constraints, the membership of these churches get more involved in ministry, and the churches actually become stronger as a result.

Bivocational ministry also can alleviate acute emergencies in forced termination situations, because the bivocational minister is usually less dependent upon the church for housing and income.

In my opinion, a bivocational minister more closely identifies with the working laypeople in his congregation, because he also experiences the demands and experiences of the workplace. As a result, he has opportunity to develop messages on "real world subjects" which offer tangible assistance to his congregation.

I would counsel anyone entering ministry today to have a marketable skill/degree in addition to theological education, and to be open to the possibility that bivocational ministry will be more prevalent in the future.

Thank you for your recognition of and respect for bivocational ministry.

Doug Warren, bivo pastor
Shiloh Church, Vaiden

Blue Mountain College sets commencement date

Blue Mountain College (BMC) will hold commencement exercises for its 128th annual session on May 6. One hundred graduates will be awarded the bachelor's degree. The baccalaureate service will be at 11 a.m. in the Modena Lowrey Berry Auditorium. Jimmy D. Porter, executive director-treasurer of the Mississippi Baptist Christian Action Commission, will deliver the sermon.

Porter

The commencement program is scheduled for 3 p.m. in Modena Lowrey Berry Auditorium with Bettye Rogers Coward, president-elect of BMC, as the featured speaker. Reserved seating is required for admission to the commencement program.

Prior to assuming his present position, Porter was pastor of the First Church in McComb. After graduating from BMC, Porter continued his education at Southern Seminary and New Orleans Seminary.

Coward

Coward currently serves as vice president for academic affairs at Mississippi College. Coward was elected to serve as the seventh president of BMC by the Board of Trustees in February and will assume the presidency in the summer of 2001.

A native of Covington County, Coward received degrees from Jones County Junior College, Mississippi University for Women, and the University of Southern Mississippi.

GOOD COMPANY

Editor:

I just finished reading your (March 22) editorial entitled Mississippi in 'good' company. Well done! The case you make is so compellingly clear it remains a mystery to me how so many really smart people can be so hood-winked by the gambling industry.

I remember when my father-in-law, Dick McCartney, took the same stand and articulated the same issues via the Messenger for Oklahoma Baptists back in the 80s, when that state was dealing with para-mutual betting and liquor by the drink. In spite of reasoned arguments and evidence of that the gambling industry was a smoke-and-mirrors business, Oklahomans joined the "poor cousins at the family reunion."

Keep the faith, brother, and keep making the case clear for those who have ears to hear.

John B. Hancock, Jr.
Dallas

PRESENCE REQUESTED

Editor:

The Middle America Region of the International Mission Board (IMB) requests your presence in prayer.

May 2 has been designated Day of Prayer for the countries that make up the Middle America Region: Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, Canada, and the El Paso Baptist Publications Mission. During this annual Day of Prayer all missionaries in the region are asked to set aside their normal activities and spend the day praying earnestly and strategically for the needs in their areas of ministry. Prayer partners around the world can join us as we pray for the Gospel to break through barriers of lostness among the millions in Middle America. Southern Baptist churches can join us by remembering Middle America during their regular, mid-week prayer services.

Nancy K. Chafin, IMB
Miami Springs, Fla.

PARTICIPANTS SOUGHT

Editor:

The International Mission Board is looking for Baptist leaders to participate in a "vision trip" called SEASCAPE, scheduled for March 4-16.

A seascape is defined as an inviting and engaging portrait of a broad seaview and this trip will give you the opportunity to see what God is doing in this part of the world. We want participants to see the lostness of the people of Southeast Asia as they live under the darkening influence and grip of Buddhism and Islam. We are also asking God for insights as we seek ways to partner with others in pushing back the darkness in Southeast Asia and Oceania.

SEASCAPE will give participants the unique opportunity to experience Asian cultures, learn about an unreached people group firsthand, and dream together with International Mission Board missionaries as they work to impact lostness.

Please consider joining other Southern Baptist leaders in this time of seeing, learning, and praying in Southeast Asia. Ground transportation is $2,250. Interested people may contact me at (800) 999-3113, ext. 1696 or 1panter@imb.org.

Libby Panter
Richmond, Va.

UNQUALIFIED?

Editor:

I understand your dismay that the female Governor, Attorney General, Secretary of State, Treasurer, Superintendent of Public Instruction, and four of the top six posts in the Arizona legislature have not been recognized by the media because they don't fit the media's qualifications for female leadership ((pro-abortion, religion-neutral, pro-gun control, etc.) What is more dismaying (and sadder still) is that not one of these women would be "qualified" to serve as a deacon in my church. How sad it is to think that only men have the necessary heart, knowledge, and skills to serve the church as deacons.

Tim Lawrence
Flowood

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Unsigned letters will not be printed. No multi-copy or form letters will be used.

Each correspondent must include an address and telephone number for verification. In special instances, name may be withheld at writer's request and editor's discretion.

Please include the name of cooperating Mississippi Baptist church where correspondent is a member. (Mississippi Baptists' letters will receive priority when space is limited.)

Letters must be limited to 250 words. All correspondence is subject to editing.

Correspondents should refrain from personal attacks. The opinions expressed in letters to the editor do not necessarily reflect the views of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board.

No more than one letter from any individual will be printed during a three-month period.

When in the judgement of the editor a given issue has received sufficient attention, correspondence dealing with it will no longer be published and a notice will be printed to that effect.

HOMECOMINGS

New Harmony (Neshoba): May 20; 11 a. m. service followed by lunch; Dewey Moore, pastor, message.

Salem (Kemper): May 6; services begins at 10:30 a.m., followed by fellowship and dinner on the grounds; Jerry Jones, pastor.

First, Boyle: May 6; 11 a.m. service, followed by lunch; Boundless Love Gospel group and Southern Heirs will perform in the sanctuary; Mike Carr, Wesson, guest speaker; Cooper Joe Deloach, Bentonia, music; Joseph Anderson, pastor.

Union, Mayton: May 6; 10:45 a.m.; lunch followed by afternoon service with the musical group, Heaven's Grace; Allen Stephens, guest speaker; Brent Bozeman, pastor.

Pearl Valley (Copiah): April 29; 11 a.m. service, Albert Parsons, guest speaker; noon meal; 1:30 p.m. service, R. F. Johnson, guest speaker; David Langston, pastor.

Kreole Avenue, Moss Point: May 6; Sunday School, 9 a.m.; service, 10 a.m., followed by dinner on the grounds; gospel music at 1:30 p.m.; Ken Chambless, pastor.

Seminary, Beaumont: May 6; 10:30 a.m.; dinner on the grounds; afternoon singing with the Walleys from Greene County; Dan Hembree is pastor.

Truth

IN CONCERT

Saturday May 5, 2001
7:30 p.m.
Broadmoor Baptist Church
Madison, MS

TICKETS:

Prices: $5 general admission ◆ $7 at the door
Outlets: Broadmoor Baptist Church ◆ LifeWay Christian Store ◆ Family Christian Store
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FAMILY BIBLE STUDY

Being a neighbor

Luke 10:25-37

By Lori Clendinning

Clendinning

"Hi-dee ho, Neighbor!"

With that friendly greeting, worldly-wise Wilson greeted his neighbor, Tim "The Tool Man" Taylor on the television show, Home Improvement, during the late 1990s. Wilson was available every week to help out his impractical, wacky neighbor by offering advice and encouragement. Although never fully seen, Wilson was a comforting presence to his neighbors.

Typically, we desire that kind of warm relationship with those whose property adjoins ours. Occasionally we deal with little squabbles and misunderstandings that arise due to straying pets, misdirected baseballs, and falling tree limbs, but overall, neighborly life is peaceful and uncomplicated.

That is, until someone against whom we're prejudiced moves in next door.

Humankind is not terribly kind when it comes to treating others who are different than us in some way, whether it is race, nationality, religion, or class. History books record major battles between factions whose prejudices against each other were gargantuan. Nightly news programs broadcast the latest regarding long-held prejudices between countries and cultures.

This week's lesson examines personal prejudices held toward others and discusses neighborly responsibility.

Although secular worldviews narrowly define neighbors as people like themselves, the Biblical worldview holds that loving one's neighbor transcends all boundaries, demonstrating love by acting for the good of others.

Luke 10 records that Jesus was headed toward Jerusalem when a lawyer approached him, asking, "Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

Jesus wisely responded to the man by using a time-held method employed by master teachers: he first asked the lawyer what was his thinking on the matter. The lawyer then answered his own query: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind, and, love your neighbor as yourself."

Having received Jesus' declaration that this was correct, the lawyer then went on to ask, "Who is my neighbor?"

Jesus answered with The Parable of The Good Samaritan, which zeroes in on personal prejudices held by Jews. By making a Samaritan the hero of the story, Jesus' parable shocked and angered his Jewish audience to whom a neighbor was a fellow Jew or a full proselyte; Samaritans were widely held in great disdain by the Jews.

Jesus' listeners could envision the parable's treacherous setting. The road from the capital city of Jerusalem went down, literally, to Jericho; the descent in less than twenty miles being about 3,500 feet. It was a very dangerous road, lying much of the way in a deep ravine, through soft rocks in which caves and chambers abounded, affording shelter to criminals who preyed upon travelers, such as the Jewish man left half-dead in Jesus' parable.

Jericho was a priestly hub, and after weekly conferences at Jerusalem, many priests would be traveling homeward by that route. And so, a Jewish priest walked by, completely ignoring his bleeding countryman, as well as his religious duty to assist him. Next, a Levite bypassed the wounded man, though he was under a similar obligation to exhibit holiness and moral kindness of his religion.

Jesus used these two cold-hearted examples to paint a picture of insensitive and vain religious people, and then contrasted their merciless act of abandoning the injured traveler with the sympathetic, compassionate labor of the Samaritan.

The Samaritan applied the approved practice of Jewish pharmacy by pouring in oil and wine on the man's wounds which stimulated recuperation. Next he hastened to get him to a place of safety and rest, trudging along on foot beside his burdened beast. Having given his own time and attention to the patient, he instructed that the invalid be cared for in his absence, providing for the contingency of extra expenses by declaring that he would recompense the landlord upon his return.

In conclusion, the lawyer had no recourse but to acknowledge that the Samaritan was the true neighbor to the wounded Jew, though he would not even say the word "Samaritan," answering instead "the one who had mercy on him."

"Go and do likewise," said Jesus.

God insists that we are to love others and to demonstrate that Christlike love toward all people for "whoever is kind to the needy honors God." (Proverbs 14:31).

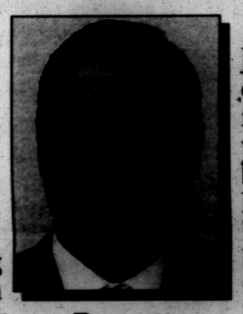
Clendinning is a former newspaper editor and a member of Park Place Church, Pearl.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Great task

1 Samuel 16:1-17:58

By Jim Burnett



Burnett

What supernatural endeavors have you attempted and accomplished lately for the Lord? In recent days, what in your life has required you to trust and depend completely on God?

The Bible reminds us of the impossibility of pleasing God without faith. Therefore, living life in Jesus' power and under his lordship is not only wise, but also divinely prescribed.

King Solomon encouraged the redeemed to "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding." Ironically it is David, Solomon's dad, who is highlighted in our lesson today and who gives us a life-sized example of what it means to trust God instead of self.

Overwhelming odds (17:32-33). In God's sight, David, the amateur warrior/shepherd boy, was the perfect candidate to fight Goliath, the seasoned warrior/giant, but why? This bout presented the perfect opportunity for God to receive glory.

As someone has said, "There is no glory for God in that which is humanly possible. Faith begins where man's power ends." The odds of David defeating this one-man wrecking machine from Gath were unfavorable to say the least.

What are the giants you are facing today? Could it be the Lord has orchestrated the circumstances in your life as to bring glory to his name?

Friend, by trusting in Jesus, you can slay the demonic foes and forces that oppress your soul therefore bringing tremendous honor to Christ. Do not let Satan bully you or bluff you. Hold up your shield of faith and face and overcome your overwhelming odds in the name of Jesus.

Reassuring experiences (17:34-37). David had found God's power and providential care to be sufficient in fighting lions and bears. The Lord had always showed up in his life when he needed him without exception. Therefore, with confidence and assurance of victory, David was ready to engage the giant.

Have you found God to be as trustworthy and dependable as David did? I hope so because the Lord has not changed since David's days on this earth. He will meet our every need. How do I know this? Since accepting Jesus into my life as my Lord and Savior, he has never disappointed me, abandoned me, or failed to provide what I needed. To be sure, this is the testimony of every Christian who walks daily with the Lord.

Motivating faith (17:44-47). Why did David feel compelled to fight Goliath and where did he find the courage to confront this warrior? Did he have a death wish? Or was he just a cocky, young teenager who thought he could whip anybody and everybody?

Perhaps David was enticed by Saul's promised reward of immediate riches and the hand of one of the king's daughters. None of these reasons moved David to step onto the battlefield with Goliath.

I believe David's desire and passion to fight Goliath was motivated by his love for the Lord and faith in the Lord. He could do nothing less than silence this uncircumcised Philistine who was taunting the army of the living God. In the name of God and in the strength of the Lord, David faced Goliath.

What is your faith in the Lord motivating you to do these days? I hope it is leading you to attempt great tasks for God to advance his purposes.

Sweeping victory (17:48-49, 51-52). David's defeat of Goliath resulted in an attitude reversal in both the Philistine army and the Israelite army. As the giant's body slammed to the ground, Israel's confidence soared to the sky.

They pursued the Philistines who were fleeing for their lives. Israel won the victory this day because one young man dared to trust God to do the impossible.

Is your faith in God inspiring others to bold endeavors for the Lord? When people look at your life in Christ, are they stimulated to serve him and obey him? Let us begin today to "Attempt great things for God and expect great things from God."

Burnett is pastor of Raymond Road Church, Jackson.

Guidelines for submitting news and photographs

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THE BAPTIST

E-mail: baptistrecord@mositn.org

PRACTICAL PRINCIPLES

Volume [illegible] ◆ A Monthly [illegible] Christian Action Commission of The Mississippi Baptist Convention ◆ [illegible]

Jimmy Porter, [illegible] Ray [illegible] Rex Wood, [illegible]

Confusion and controversy me[illegible] 2001. As a nation we chose a Pre[illegible] a flag. Our tendency is to say, "so[illegible] lost" when in reality we are all w[illegible] America we have the freedom to [illegible] convictions. It is now time for us to [illegible] and as a state.

The flag issue overshadowed mu[illegible] past legislative session. For Lee Y[illegible] learning experience, perhaps m[illegible] Legislation 101. It didn't take long [illegible] decisions are made in the corridor[illegible] in the committees, conferences, a[illegible] that if the leadership in the House o[illegible] it has the same life expectancy as a s[illegible] [illegible] bill to become law, [illegible] deadline in late July.

One representative said, "the wh[illegible] one." His assessment is fairly accura[illegible] [illegible] to kill a bill, not pass [illegible] meet the strictest standards before it [illegible] [illegible] bill bad because a bill needs to [illegible] The downside to this is that some good legislation never makes it [illegible]

There are some fine Christian men [illegible] [illegible] serve as our representatives [illegible] and senators. Pray for them and en[illegible] [illegible] know how you feel about certain issues. It is okay to ask [illegible] "why" they voted a particular way on issues that concern you. [illegible] not [illegible] represent you unless you communicate with them. The ma[illegible] want to do what is right and decent when given the opportunity.

The following information will pro[illegible] a brief synopsis of a few of the bills. Many of these will be on the agenda [illegible] hopefully some of them will make it to the Governor's desk for [illegible]

2001-2002

SPECIAL EMPHASIS SUNDAYS

Mississippi Legislative Report

While there were thousands of bills filed in the House and the Senate in 2001, only a handful made it through the myriad of committees and conferences into law. Listed below are a few of the bills that dealt with issues that should concern Mississippi Baptists. One will notice immediately that most social issues evoke controversy that most lawmakers avoid like the plague; therefore, all pro-life legislation and legislation that limited alcohol consumption died.

ABORTION

HB 207 would have limited the legalization of abortion. It was sponsored by Representative Fleming. The bill died in a house committee on January 30th.

SB 2383 offered protection from High Risk and Coercive Abortion. It was sponsored by Senator White (29th). The bill died in a senate committee on January 30th.

SB 2397 would have restricted abortion in 2nd and 3rd trimesters. The bill was sponsored by Senator Ross and died in committee on January 30th.

SB 2427 would have given citizens an opportunity to purchase a Choose Life License Plate. It was sponsored by Senator White (29th). The bill was moved to HB 488 and on March 26th it died in conference.

SR 63 submitted by Senator Travis Little, President Pro Tempore, urged the United States Congress to pass legislation banning partial-birth abortions. It was adopted by the Senate on March 29, 2001, and signed by Lieutenant Governor Amy Tuck, President of the Senate.

ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES

HB 585 would prohibit possession of open containers of alcohol in a motor vehicle. The bill was sponsored by Representative Reeves and died in committee on January 30th.

SB 2663 was a[illegible] open container bill. It was spons[illegible] by Senator White (29th). It also died in committee.

HB 841 would have created offense of certain establishments licensed to sell alcohol, allowing persons under 21 on premises. The bill was sponsored by Representati[illegible], and on February 27th, it died in Committee.

CHILDREN

HB 169 prescribed a procedure for a parent to surrender custody without liability. This is sometimes called the Child Abandonment Bill. It is designed to save babies' lives. Sponsored by Representative Taylor, it was signed by Governor Musgrove on March 23rd.

DRUNK DRIVING

HB 794 would have included the death of an unborn fetus in a manslaughter provision. Sponsored by Representative Robinson (84th), it died in committee on January 30th.

HB 164 would lower the blood alcohol level to .08% for [illegible] driving. It was sponsored by Representative Montgomery (74th) and on January 30th, died in committee.

SB 2[illegible] same as above (.08%). It was sponsored by S[illegible]. The senate bill died in committee on February 27th.

GAMBLING

HB 248 would have authorized gaming-related courses be taught in universities and community Colleges. Representative Clark sponsored the bill and thankfully it died in committee on January 30th.

IN GOD WE TRUST

HB 51 was approved by the Governor and provides for a moment of quiet reflection in the classroom as well as making it mandatory for the nation's motto, "In God We Trust," to be placed in each school classroom.

These bills represent only the tip of the iceberg for the 2001 legislative session. However, these are the bills on which the Christian Action Commission took a stand. For a full listing of all legislative bills, go to http://billstatus.ls.state.ms.us/2001/html/subjects.htm.

If you are interested in receiving Christian Action updates via the internet and will share this information with friends and your church, please e-mail [illegible] and your name, address, phone, church and church name.

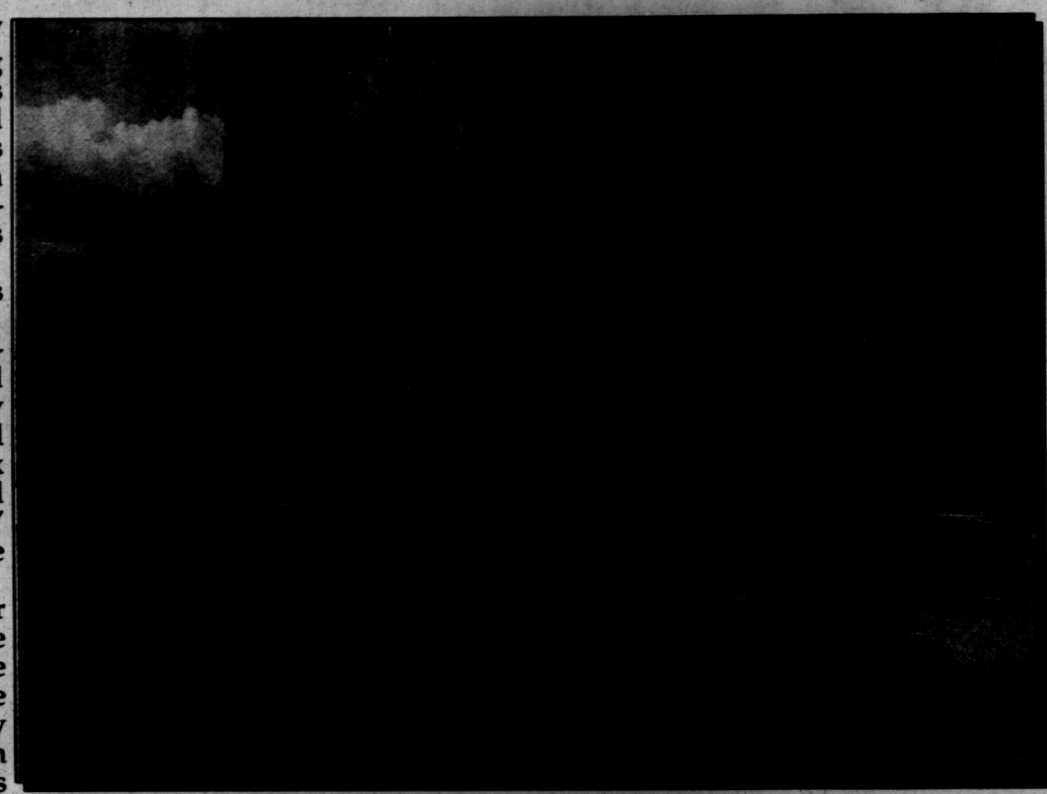
Six years later, OKC bomb still traumatizes

OKLAHOMA CITY (BP) — The one good thing Wyatt Burks remembers about April 19, 1995, and the days following was aiding in the rescue of a U.S. Customs worker — the only person Burks brought out alive.

The rest he'd just as soon forget.

Burks, like many emergency personnel and those closely affected by the Murrah Federal Building bombing six years ago, has struggled at times with "issues" related to the tragedy, he said.

Unlike many other people involved in the tragedy, the experience has made Burks more able to talk intimately with his wife and though his list of church activities has shortened, his faith is stronger than ever, he said.



STRENGTHENED — Unlike some of his co-workers, Oklahoma City fireman Wyatt Burks, standing at the Oklahoma City National Memorial Center, emerged from the 1995 bombing with a stronger faith and a marriage in which he talks "about things I never talked to her about before." (BP photo)

Burks is a member of Southern Hills Church in Oklahoma City.

"After 28 years of marriage, I talk to her about things I never talked to her about before. I guess it's just ignorance, but you wake up to certain things. As long as I'm with my wife and family, I'm happy."

Burks added, "I'm sorry to say in some cases it didn't work that way."

Among emergency personnel who worked the bombing, divorce statistics are up by most accounts, as are substance abuse cases, suicides, and similar problems.

Ted Wilson, Oklahoma City Fire Department chaplain and a member of Henderson Hills Church in Edmond, said department statistics recorded since 1995 show about 30 divorces per year. No records were kept prior to that, but Wilson guesses the rate was probably around 10 annually — a threefold rise if correct.

"The last 12 months have seen about 16 divorces, so we're improving a little. Part of that might be the increasing distance of the event. People are accessing the systems that are there for help and are building trust" with trained counselors, Wilson said.

Burks said he believes many pastors and church staff members have unwittingly left some of his colleagues and others affected by the bombing without adequate follow-up care.

"A lot of guys would have stayed more involved in church had there been someone there to talk to when they were ready or needed to talk," Wilson said. Many clergy members are trained in grief management, he said, but not the traumatic stress suffered in something of the bombing's magnitude.

"These [emergency personnel] are self-motivated, highly competent professionals. They are used to dealing with trauma... They try to apply the same coping techniques to their emotional injuries.

"They admit there's a problem only when their spouse walks out or their job performance deteriorates. Unfortunately, that's an inherent danger," Wilson said.

Joe Williams, head of the Crisis Intervention Institute in Oklahoma City and chaplain for the FBI at the time of the bombing, said churches historically have been poor at follow-up.

Years ago as a pastor, Williams said he preached the funeral of a young murder victim and recalled telling the family shortly after, "If you all need anything, you call me."

"Those calls never come," Williams said, "because often, they don't know what they need. I should have gone back and said to them, 'I'll go with you to the scene of the crime if you want,' walked with them through the valley, been there with them at the trial..."

Unfortunately, Williams said, many pastors and Christian counselors are suffering from what he terms "compassion fatigue" from years of sharing grief with their church family during the ordinary course of ministry.

Williams said such fatigue, combined with a lack of awareness, might have contributed to some churches not following through in helping those hurt by the tragedy.

"Pastors have to be tough so they can help everybody else — that's part of the problem," he said.

Whatever coping mechanisms people use before a crisis tend to be used in greater amounts during and after a crisis, Williams said.

For instance, if one drinks socially to ease pain, after a crisis that person might develop a more serious drinking problem, or someone who gambles to relax might develop a gambling addiction.

"The devil makes sure that you get hammered," the fire department's Wilson added.

"That's why it's important for pastors to be as prepared as they can to deal with this population of people in their churches. We need to be ready to take care of those people," he pointed out.

Tragic bombing provided turning point for mending father/son relationship

OKLAHOMA CITY (BP) — Ralph [illegible] and his son, Ralph, are celebrating [illegible] sion to their relationship. The elder [illegible] retired in 1990 after 29 years as [illegible] Church in Oklahoma City, [illegible] Oklahoma City [illegible] favorite preachers [illegible] what Jesus [illegible] you [illegible]

[illegible] months passed after the tragedy, Ca[illegible] Jr. began reading his Bible, tuning in to [illegible] and television preachers, and attending [illegible] more.

[illegible] met a woman, Laura Heritage, who [illegible] his wife. "We started going to [illegible] doing things [illegible] The Lord [illegible] to [illegible] one of the [illegible] to know [illegible] staff or [illegible] that I had [illegible]

[illegible] and he [illegible] the next [illegible] who [illegible]

Bibliocipher

By Charles Marx
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DMG XBNWN NDCG ZMSB SIW EWBEVW, LWDY UW MBS, NSDMG NSCVV, DMG NWW SIW NDVODSCBM BL SIW VBYG, PICKI IW PCVV NIWP SB UBZ SBGDU; LBY SIW WHUESCDMN PIBX UW IDOW NWWM SBGDU, UW NIDVV NWW SIWX DHDCM MB XBYW LBY WOWY.

WTBGZN LBZYSWWM:

SICYSWWN

Clue: Z = U

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Isaiah Fifty-Two: Six.